

# Reading for Meaning

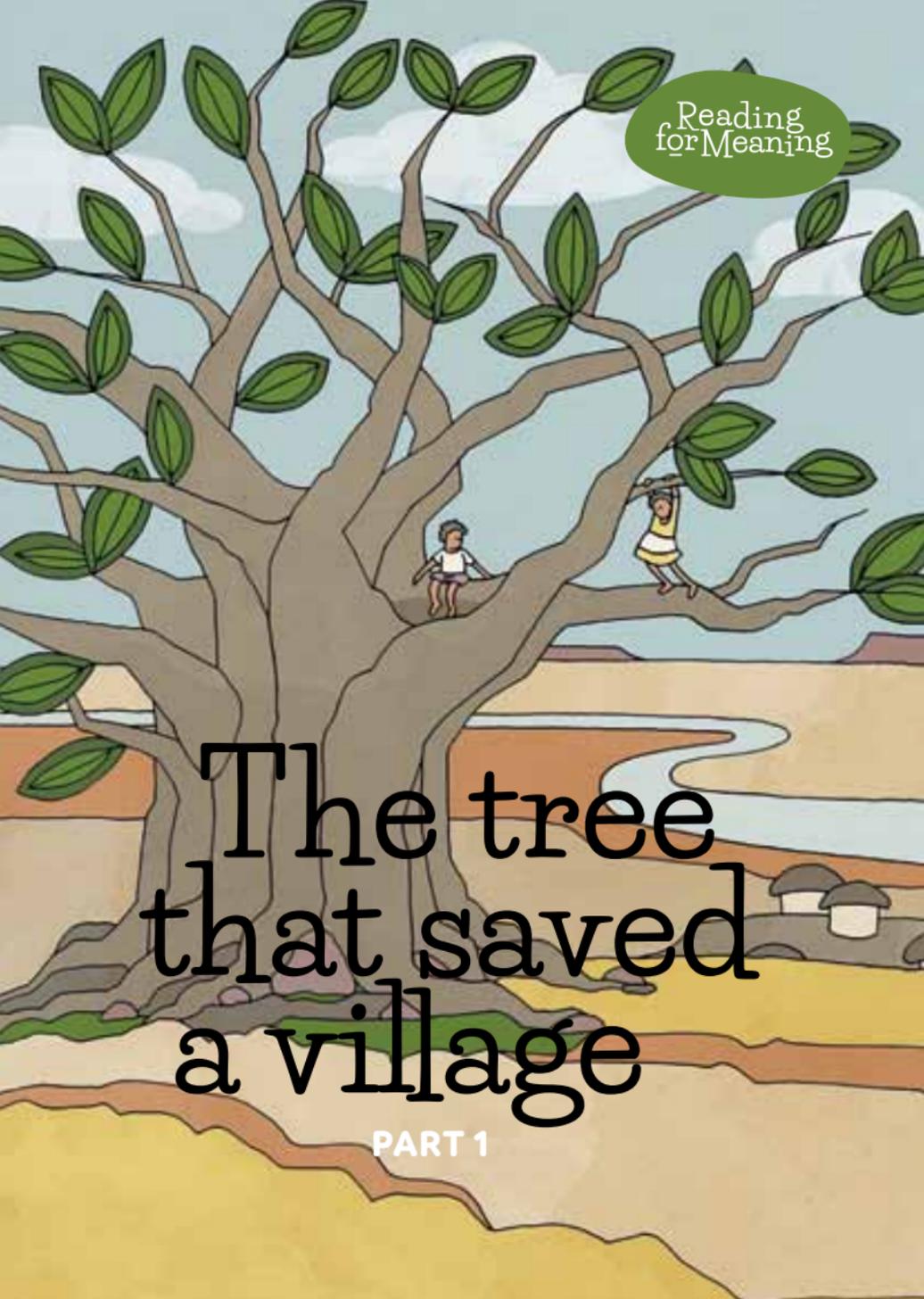
**Welcome, story supporter!**

**We hope that you and your child  
have fun with this story.**

**Nurturing and supporting  
your child is important for  
their physical, emotional and  
academic development.**

**ZERO  
DROP/OUT**

**Part of the Zero Dropout campaign working towards  
halving the rate of school dropout by 2030.**



Reading  
for Meaning

# The tree that saved a village

PART 1

There was once a girl called Thaimi who lived in the village of Ombalantu.

This village was in northern Namibia, in a very hot and dry place. It was almost a desert, but there was a river nearby. The river gave them enough water to grow grain and to keep a few cattle and goats, just enough for their needs.

It was not a rich village, but they had one great treasure.

On the edge of this village, there was a remarkable tree. This tree was very old and very big. How old was it? It was hundreds of years old; some said it was 800 years old. How tall was it? It grew up 28 meters into the sky. To reach the top of that tree, it would need 16 very tall people standing on each other's shoulders. How wide was it? It was 26 meters around the trunk of the tree. To make a circle around the trunk, it would take 25 big people holding hands.

This huge tree was a baobab tree, and many

animals depended on it. They lived in the tree or they came to it for food: bats and birds, baboons and bush babies, insects and even elephants came to enjoy the benefits of this tree.

Not only the animals depended on the tree. The people of Ombalantu would have told you “We love this tree. We love to eat its leaves and its fruits. We make baskets from its bark. When we are ill, we even get medicine from this tree.” But I don’t think they would have told you “This tree has saved our lives.’ But that changed on the day of our story.

Now, the girl Thaimi especially loved this tree because she and Angula would climb inside it. Right inside. Yes, this huge baobab tree was hollow, with an opening high up. No-one else knew about this opening. Thaimi and Angula would climb through the opening, hide away inside the tree and play for hours, and no-one could see them there.

But life was not all about playing games. Every day Thaimi had to go to the river to fetch water. The river was quite far, so on this day, she took her little brother, Angula.

While Thaimi was filling her water pot, the little boy Angula saw a hare. He ran after it. He ran and ran and ran - but do you think he could catch the hare? He could not. The hare was too quick for him.

Thaimi's water pot was full and she was ready to go home. She looked around but could not see Angula. She did not know where he had gone. But she did know she couldn't go home without her little brother. She set out to look for him. She walked, she walked, and she walked.

At last, she saw Angula lying in the long grass behind a large anthill. As she came close, he held his finger to his lips. Close by a group of strange men were resting. The men had bows, arrows and spears! Thaimi could hear their voices.

“Angula,” she whispered, after she had listened for a bit, “those men are raiders. They are planning to steal our cattle and burn our village tonight. Come quickly. We must run home and warn the village.”

So very quietly, Thaimi and Angula crept away from that place.

They ran back towards their village.

When they were near their village, they met their uncle. He was taking his cow to the water. Thaimi called out, “Run, uncle, run back! Men are coming to steal our cattle and burn our village!” Her uncle turned his cow around and hurried back towards the village.

Further on Thaimi saw her aunt working in the field with the other women and she called out, “Run aunt, run! Men are coming to steal our cattle and burn our village!” And the women took their hoes, picked up their sleeping babies and ran back towards the village.

Further on Thaimi saw her grandfather. He was limping along the road beside a donkey loaded with grain. And she called out, “Run grandfather, run! Men are coming to steal our cattle and burn our village!” Her grandfather lifted his stick and chased the donkey back towards the village.

And so Thaimi and her brother and her uncle and her aunt and the other women and her grandfather all reached the village.

And she called out to everyone in the village, “Run, run! Men are coming to steal our cattle and burn our village!”

*To be continued...*

*Based on “The Tree that saved the village of Ombalantu” by Karen van Wiese, Beryl Salt, Muhdni Grimwood, Barbara Meyerowitz with additional information from Wikipedia and [www.namibian.com](http://www.namibian.com)*

**EXTEND THE STORY...**

# Memory game



**GAMES**

## **WHAT TO USE**

*Pen / pencil, piece of paper*

## **WHAT TO DO**

- Ask your child to answer the following questions:
  1. **What was the big tree called?**
  2. **How big and tall was it?**
  3. **Why did the people of Ombalantu love the big tree?**
  4. **How did Thaimi feel about what was happening?**

## EXTEND THE STORY...

How will  
it end?



WRITING  
ACTIVITIES



READING  
ALoud

### WHAT TO USE

*Pen / pencil, piece of paper*

### WHAT TO DO

- Ask your child to write down how they think the story is going to end and then share with you.
- Ask them why they think the story will end that way.

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